

VZCZCXRO2457
PP RUEHBI RUEHCI
DE RUEHCI #0064 0511221
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
P R 201221Z FEB 08
FM AMCONSUL KOLKATA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1891
INFO RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 1770
RUEHBI/AMCONSUL MUMBAI 0815
RUEHCG/AMCONSUL CHENNAI 0810
RUEHKT/AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU 0535
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RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RUEILB/NCTC WASHINGTON DC
RUEIDN/DNI WASHINGTON DC
RHMFIUU/DEPT OF ENERGY WASHINGTON DC
RHMFIUU/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI
RUEHCI/AMCONSUL KOLKATA 2309

UNCLAS KOLKATA 000064

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE
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DEPT FOR ISN/CTR

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [KNNP](#) [TRGY](#) [PARM](#) [PGOV](#) [IN](#)

SUBJECT: BIHAR POLICE SEIZE FOUR KILOGRAMS OF SUSPECTED URANIUM

¶1. (SBU) On February 19, Bihar Police seized approximately four kilograms of what they believe may be low-grade uranium in the Supaul district near the Indo-Nepal border. The Bihar police arrested six people connected with the smuggling operation, including a Sashatra Seema Bal (SSB) constable posted in Assam. [Note: SSB is a paramilitary force that guards the Indo-Nepal border. End Note.] After the arrest, the suspects reportedly confessed that they were carrying uranium, but test results on the material (which was handed over to the Indian Army) could take two-to-three days. The SSB Director General told post that the material was housed in a package labeled "Fool's Gold - Made in Japan," and the suspects apparently planned to smuggle the substance across the border into Nepal.

¶2. (SBU) The arrested men indicated that the alleged uranium came from the northeast Indian state of Meghalaya. Uranium in Meghalaya's mines is generally considered to be low-grade and unprocessed. One Post contact in the Bihar police pointed out that the uranium mine in Jadugoda, Jharkhand would have been a more accessible area to smuggle uranium from, indicating that Bihar police are doubtful about whether the seized substance is in fact uranium.

¶3. (SBU) Comment: The corridor linking India's Northeast runs across W. Bengal and Bihar and is a nexus for smuggling all manner of illicit items into Nepal and Bangladesh and mainland India. SSB officers who monitor border traffic are susceptible to corruption and involvement in smuggling. There have been media reports in the past of suspected uranium smuggling from Meghalaya (http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/low/south_asia/44327_03.stm). Post will continue to follow up on the arrests and provide further details as they become available, but authorities at this point remain reticent about discussing the case.

JARDINE